

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for indicating the allowability of claims 11-16.

In the above-noted Final Official Action, claim 17 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over COOPER (U.S. Patent No. 5,995,140). Claim 18 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over COOPER in view of VOLTZ (U.S. Patent No. 6,314,523). In view of the herein-contained amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections, as well as an indication of the allowability of each of the claims now pending, in due course.

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 17 and 18 will each have been canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of claims 17 and 18 have been rendered moot.

Additionally, claim 12 will have been amended to more clearly recite the features of the claimed invention. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to claim 12 do not raise new issues for consideration by the Examiner; rather, the amendments to claim 12 are minor grammatical revisions that do not change the scope of the claims. Accordingly, while amendments to the claims cannot be made as a matter of right after a final rejection, Applicants submit that entry of the present amendments would be proper.

Applicants submit that the cancellation of claims 17 and 18 should not be considered an indication of Applicants' acquiescence with the propriety of the outstanding rejections. Rather, claims 17 and 18 have been cancelled in order to obtain early allowance of claims in the present application.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that each of the claims now pending is allowable, at least because each of the claims now pending has previously been indicated by the Examiner as reciting a combination of features which are not disclosed, suggested or rendered obvious by the prior art of record in the present application.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In view of the fact that none of the art of record, discloses, suggests or renders obvious the invention recited in the claims now pending, and in further view of the herein-contained amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections, as well as an indication of the allowance of each of the claims now pending.

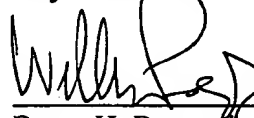
The amendment or cancellation of any claim by this amendment, which has not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Commissioner determine that an extension of time is required in order to render this response timely and/or complete, a formal request for an extension of time, under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a), is herewith made in an amount equal to the time period required to render this response timely and/or complete. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any required extension of time fee under 37 C.F.R. §1.17 to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

If there should be any questions concerning this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

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Respectfully submitted,
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